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Viewing cable 06CAIRO1297, SCENESETTER FOR DEFENSE MINISTER TANTAWI'S VISIT

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See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags #cablegate and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. #[06CAIRO1297](#).

| Reference ID | Created | Released | Classification | Origin |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 06CAIRO1297 | 2006-03-01 14:38 | 2011-08-30 01:44 | CONFIDENTIAL | Embassy Cairo |

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9135>
<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9164>
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<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/10185>

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 001297

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2016
TAGS: PREL PGOV MASS IS EG
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR DEFENSE MINISTER TANTAWI'S VISIT
TO WASHINGTON

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: During his March 5-10 visit to Washington, Defense Minister Tantawi will seek Administration support for the current level of FMF funding. Tantawi feels that any USG concerns about the pace of democratic reform should be kept distinct from the mil-mil relationship, which he considers the cornerstone of the bilateral relationship. He will emphasize MoD's support for the U.S.'s regional priorities. Tantawi may seek financial or technical assistance for the Border Guard Forces posted on Egypt's border with Gaza and may also ask the U.S. to press Israel to allow Egypt to place another battalion in the Sinai to counter smuggling and other cross-border threats. End summary.

¶2. (C) FMF: Maintaining the status quo on Egypt's FMF is first and foremost on Tantawi's agenda. He was sobered by last year's debate over the potential removal of the earmark and was disappointed that neither the Secretary of Defense or State sent a letter to Congress on Egypt's behalf. Expecting another difficult debate over FMF this year, Tantawi believes that the battle will be easier if he can persuade USG officials to speak out on Egypt's behalf. During the 2005 appropriations debates, MoD officials stressed repeatedly that maintaining the earmark on FMF was a matter of honor because it symbolizes the value the USG places on the relationship. They noted, for example, that there was no similar threat to the earmark for Jordan or Israel and said that denying Egypt the earmark would signal a downgrade in the relationship.

¶2. (C) Regional support: To justify maintaining the current level of FMF, Tantawi will explain how Egypt supports the USG's regional priorities, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and Sudan. MoD's contributions include: staffing a field hospital in Bagram, Afghanistan; donating arms and ammunition to Afghanistan; posting two MoD engineers in Kabul to advise on reconstruction efforts; assigning a MoD officer to the Joint Task Force Horn of Africa; and training over 400 members of Iraq's security forces. MoD is also committed to regional peacekeeping operations and has posted 796 troops and 20 observers with the UN Mission in Sudan and 33 civilian monitors and 18 MoD medical specialists in Darfur.

¶3. (C) Gaza border: Tantawi may highlight MoD's increasingly important role in maintaining stability along the border with Gaza. Since the August deployment of 750 professional border guards to the Sinai, smuggling interdictions have increased. Although the troops are poorly equipped and in need of additional training, they have handled security incidents with restraint. For example, when members of the Al Aksa Martyrs Brigade broke through the wall separating Gaza and Egypt on January 4, the Border Guard Forces worked with police to apprehend (with only a minimal use of force) the nearly 1,000 Palestinians who entered Egypt illegally. Most of the Palestinians were returned to Gaza immediately, and only four remain in prison in Rafah pending trial. MoD officials have said they would like U.S. financial or technical support for their efforts on the border. In October 2005, they submitted a proposal requesting 300 million. We suggest that this request deserves scrutiny; the Egyptians do need help controlling the border. Tantawi or his advisors may raise this again in Washington. Because of concerns about the fragile state of border security and the ongoing smuggling problem, Tantawi has pressed Israel to agree to the placement of an additional battalion in the Sinai. Tantawi asked both Vice President

Cheney (during their early January meeting) and LTG Dayton (later in January) to urge Israel to agree to the additional battalion. He also raised it with Israeli Defense Minister Mofaz in February, but MoD contacts said that Mofaz was unresponsive.

¶4. (C) MoD management: On the internal front, Tantawi and his advisors have been unreceptive to suggestions that the Defense Ministry consider a transformation plan, as is done in the U.S. military. Tantawi and his advisors have declined numerous offers of briefings on transformation as it impacts staffing, doctrine, training, and equipment. Decision-making at the Ministry is hierarchical, with Tantawi's personal approval required for nearly all decisions, including, for example, who will attend low-level training. Although we can continue to encourage the Ministry to reevaluate its procedures in light of changing national and regional dynamics and modern practices, absent a change in leadership, it is unlikely that MoD will act.

¶5. (C) International Medical Center: One sensitive issue on the slate is whether the treatment of third country patients at the FMF-funded International Medical Center (IMC) violates Section Three of the Arms Export Control Act of ¶1976. Because the USG funded the IMC for the treatment of members of the Egyptian military and their families, State is exploring whether the IMC's treatment of third country patients is illegal. One of Tantawi's advisors is working with post to collect the information needed to make this determination. Tantawi will not raise this issue himself in any meetings.

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